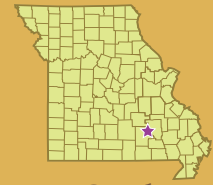


Current River Hills

Conservation Opportunity Area



Ozark
Highlands



The Current River Hills include the forests, woodlands, glades, fens and caves surrounding the Current and Jacks Fork Rivers.

Lee Hughes, Missouri Department of Conservation

The Current River Hills Conservation Opportunity Area (COA) includes one of the largest tracts of forests and woodlands in the lower Midwest. The region is best known for extensive shortleaf pine-oak forests and woodlands that supported an exceptional timber boom at the turn of twentieth century. Open oak and pine woodlands with bluestem grass occupied higher, gentler ground and exposed slopes. Oak and shortleaf pine forests were best developed on the roughest lands. The landscape features glades, cliffs, fens, sinkhole ponds, caves, springs and streams.

Much of the Current River Hills is underlain by soluble rock, giving rise to sinkholes, caves and springs. There are over 300 recorded caves within the boundaries of Ozark National Scenic Riverways. Sixty percent of the Current and Jacks Fork Rivers' flow comes from seven major springs and 51 springs of various sizes. The Current River

is noted by The Nature Conservancy as the most significant mid-sized river in midcontinental North America. Both the Current River and Jacks Fork River are designated as Outstanding National Resource Waters.

Pioneer Forest is a large, privately-owned forest within the Current River Hills COA. For more than 50 years, they have used single-tree selection harvests in managing the forest to restore high quality oak-hickory forests and woodlands, establish sustainable harvests and protect significant natural communities.

The Current River Hills provide habitat for many Ozark animals, including dark-sided salamanders, gray bats, pileated woodpeckers, Ozark hellbenders and checkered madtoms. Noteworthy plants include harebell, small white lady-slipper and Southern monkshood. The existing conservation network provides an opportunity to conserve wildlife at a landscape scale.

Current River Hills Conservation Strategies

- Improve water quality and habitat for aquatic species of conservation concern.
- Conserve and restore large blocks of healthy forest and woodland natural communities with an emphasis on private lands.
- Reduce damaging harvest practices on private lands through increased logger training and incentives.
- Conserve caves and springs.
- Locate and conserve the highest quality examples of all natural community types.
- Control unwanted non-native invasive plants and animals.
- Work with willing landowners to implement conservation practices.
- Educate the public about caves and spring systems.
- Promote cane establishment on appropriate sites along the Current River.



Cliff White, Missouri Department of Conservation

Over 1 million people visit the Ozark National Scenic Riverways each year – many of them canoe or float the Current and Jacks Fork Rivers.

Priority Research and Inventory Needs

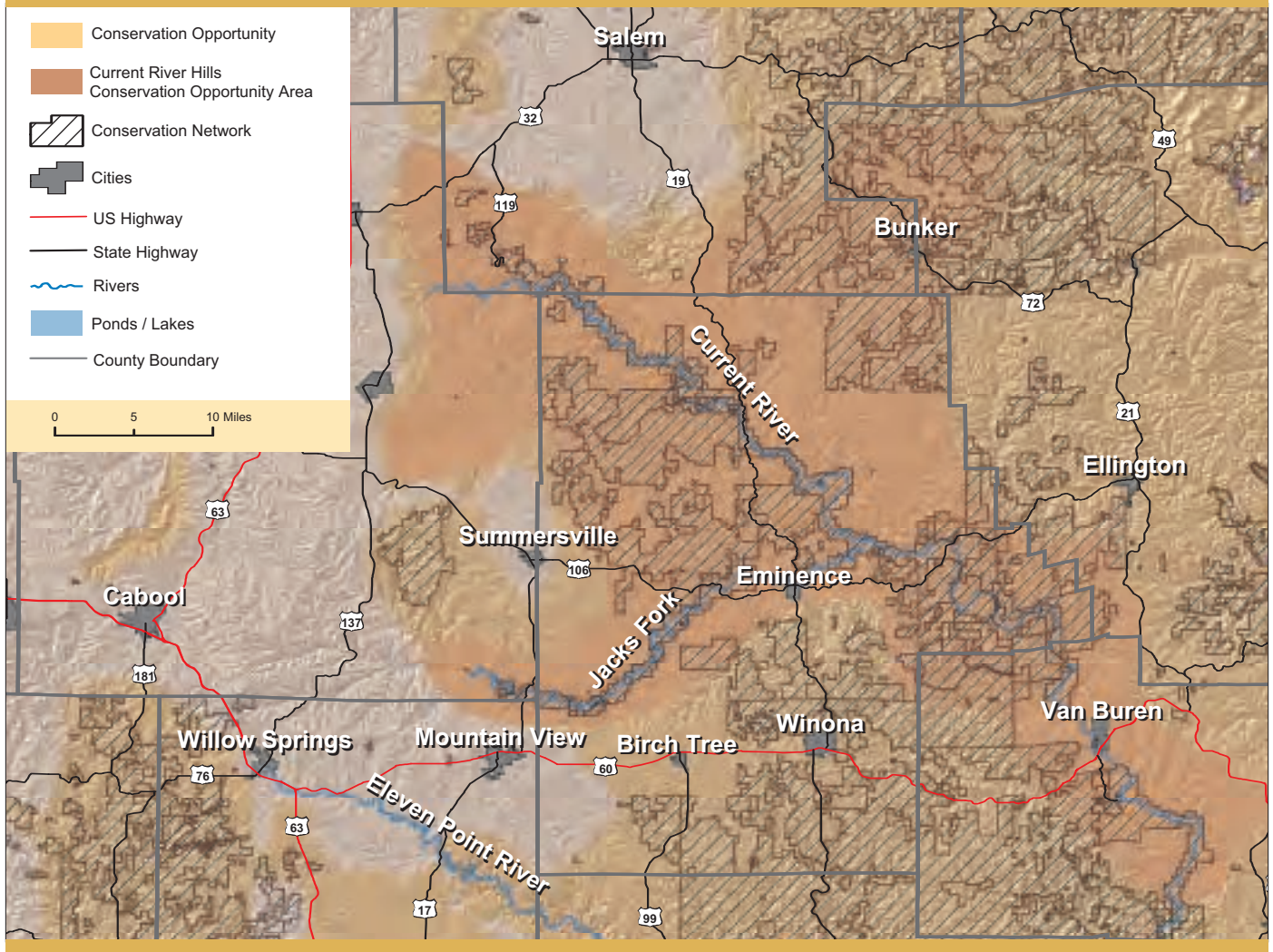
- Inventory caves; conduct dye-trace studies to improve understanding of recharge zones.
- Contact private landowners to better assess landowner management objectives and opportunities for management assistance.
- Inventory natural communities, including woodlands, forests, glades, fens, and karst features using newest methods and technology.
- Conduct inventories for flatwoods and other unstudied woodland natural communities; nominate best examples as Missouri Natural Areas.
- Inventory extent of non-native invasive plants and animals.
- Research the impact of recreational use on water quality and aquatic habitats.
- Review agencies' practices on conservation lands to ensure that conservation actions match stated goals.

Conservation Partners

Existing: Ozark Regional Land Trust (ORLT); Pioneer Forest; The Nature Conservancy – Missouri Chapter (TNC); Cave Research Foundation; Missouri Cave and Karst Conservancy; U.S. Forest Service (USFS); National Park Service (NPS); Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR); Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)

Potential: Audubon Missouri; Central Hardwoods Joint Venture; Jack's Fork Watershed Committee; National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf); Scenic Rivers Watershed Partnership; Missouri Ozarks Regional Explorers; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Current River Hills Conservation Opportunity Area



Funding Sources

Existing: NPS annual budget; MDC annual budget; MDC State Wildlife Grants; DNR annual budget; USFS annual budget; TNC annual budget; Pioneer Forest annual budget; ORLT annual budget

Promising Future Sources: NWTf Wild Turkey Super Fund; MDC Landowner Incentive Program; MDC Forest Legacy Program; USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program; Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation Grants; L-A-D Foundation Grants; NRCS Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program

Existing Conservation Network

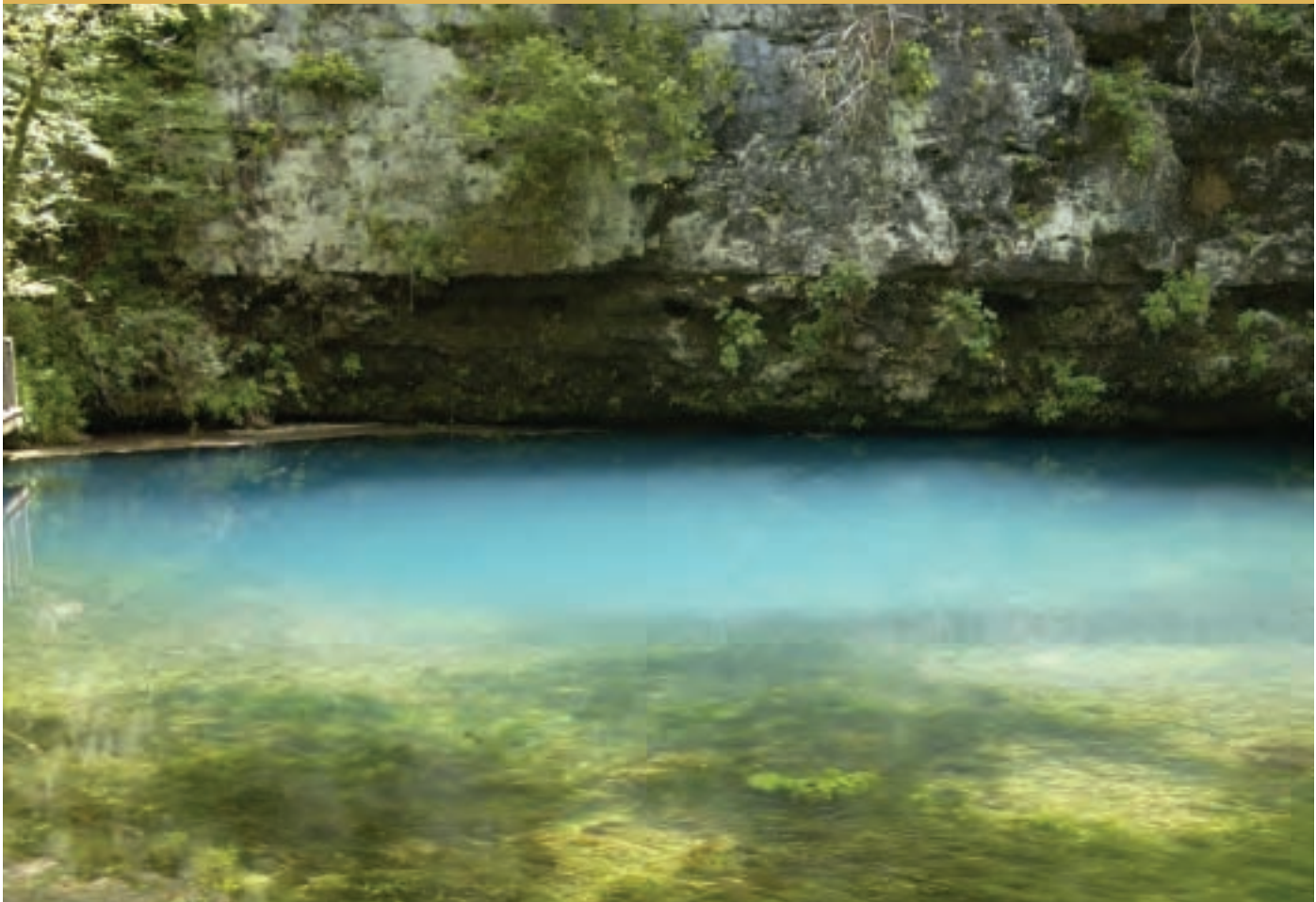
Ozark National Scenic Riverways (Jacks Fork Natural Area, Big Spring Pines Natural Area, Mill Mountain Natural Area, Cardareva Bluff Natural Area, Prairie Hollow Gorge Natural Area, Big Spring Natural Area); Angeline Conservation Area (Pipestem Hollow Natural Area, Spurgeon Hollow Natural Area); Sunklands Conservation Area (Sunklands Natural Area);

Current River Conservation Area (Blue Spring Natural Area); Peck Ranch Conservation Area (Stegall Mountain Natural Area, Golden Seal Natural Area, Mule Hollow Glade Natural Area); Rocky Creek Conservation Area (Powder Mill Cave Natural Area); Cedar Grove Conservation Area; Montauk State Park (Montauk Fish Hatchery and Trout Park, Montauk Upland Forest Natural Area); Mark Twain National Forest – Salem/Potosi District (Blair Creek Raised Fen Natural Area); Mark Twain National Forest – Doniphan/Eleven Point District; Chilton Creek Preserve; Thorny Mountain Preserve; Shut-in Mountain Fens Preserve; Alton Box – Pulltite Preserve; Bat Cave Preserve; Pioneer Forest (Pioneer Natural Area, Current River Natural Area, Scenic Easements, Virgin Pine Reserve, Cave Spring); Barn Hollow Natural Area; Triple Sink Natural Area; Bee Rock Sink Natural Area; Gilmore Pond Natural Area; Buttin Rock Access; South Prong Access; Hunter Towersite; Montauk Towersite; Pigeon Creek Conservation Easement



The male scarlet tanager is one of the most brilliantly colored birds in Missouri forests.

Blue Spring Natural Area



Blue Spring Natural Area on the Current River is a large, beautiful, undisturbed spring and spring branch. At 300 feet, it is Missouri's deepest spring and the sixth largest based on an average daily flow of 90 million gallons.

Jim Rathert, Missouri
Department of Conservation

Conservation Challenges

The Current River Hills is in the heart of one of the largest forested areas in the Midwest. Care of the landscape has important implications for the long-term survival of forest interior birds and other forest-dwelling wildlife. It is home to many natural communities, rare plants and animals, as well as two nationally significant rivers. The existing conservation network provides opportunity for resource conservation as well as for public use of these outstanding resources. Potential challenges to

conservation success include problematic invasive plants and animals (e.g. spotted knapweed, garlic mustard, sericea lespedeza, multiflora rose, zebra mussels, Asiatic clams, gypsy moths and Japanese honeysuckle), economic realities of landowners, lack of inventory data, limited staff time and increasing demand for industrial development, road-building and recreational use (ATVs, horses, boating).

To learn more about the Current River Hills Conservation Opportunity Area, please contact:



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